

Lyons

P O E M

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
SOCIETY OF UNITED BROTHERS,
AT
BROWN UNIVERSITY,

ON THE DAY PRECEDING COMMENCEMENT,
SEPTEMBER 6, 1831.

WITH OTHER POEMS.

BY
N. P. WILLIS.

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TO ONE—

OF WHOM, IN THIS MOMENT OF DEPARTURE FOR A FOREIGN LAND,

I THINK, SADLY AND ONLY—

TO MY MOTHER,

THIS VOLUME IS, WITH THE DEEPEST AFFECTION OF HER SON,

FONDLY AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

POEM

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On the day preceding Commencement, Sept. 6, 1831,

BY N. P. WILLIS.

P O E M .

IF in the eyes that rest upon me now
I see the light of an immortal fire—
If in the awe of concentrated thought,
The solemn presence of a multitude
Breathing together, the instinctive mind
Acknowledges aright a type of God—
If every soul that from its chambers dim
Answers this summons, be a deathless spark
Lit to outburn the ever constant stars,—
Then is the ruling spirit of this hour
Compell'd from Heaven, and if the soaring minds
Usher'd this day upon an untried flight
Stoop not their courses, we are met to cheer
Spirits of light sprung freshly on their way.

How strangely certain is the human mind,
Godlike and gifted as it is, to err !
It wakes within a frame of various powers,
A stranger in a new and wondrous world.
It brings an instinct from some other sphere,
For its fine senses are familiar all,
And, with th' unconscious habit of a dream,
It calls, and they obey. The priceless sight
Springs to its curious organ, and the ear
Learns strangely to detect the articulate air
In its unseen divisions, and the tongue
Gets its miraculous lesson with the rest,
And in the midst of an obedient throng
Of well-trained ministers, the mind goes forth
To search the secrets of a new-found home.

Its infancy is full of hope and joy.
Knowledge is sweet, and Nature is a nurse
Gentle and holy; and the light and air,
And all things common, warm it like the sun,
And ripen the eternal seed within.
And so its youth glides on; and still it seems
A heavenward spirit, straying oftentimes,
But never widely; and if Death might come
And ravish it from earth as it is now,
We could almost believe that it would mount,

Spotless and radiant, from the very grave.
But manhood comes, and in its bosom sits
Another spirit. Stranger as it seems,
It is familiar there, for it has grown
In the unsearch'd recesses all unseen,—
Or if its shadow darkened the bright doors,
'Twas smiled upon and gently driven in;
And as the spider and the honey-bee
Feed on the same bright flowers, this mocking soul
Fed with its purer brother, and grew strong,
Till now, in semblance of the soul itself,
With its own mien and sceptre, and a voice
Sweet as an angel's and as full of power,
It sits, a bold usurper on the throne.
What is its nature? 'Tis a child of clay,
And born of human passions. In its train
Follow all things unholy—Love of Gold,
Ambition, Pleasure, Pride of place or name,
All that we worship for itself alone,
All that we may not carry through the grave.
We have made idols of these perishing things
Till they have grown time-honored on their shrines,
And all men bow to them. Yet what *are* they?
What is AMBITION? 'Tis a glorious cheat!
Angels of light walk not so dazzlingly
The sapphire walls of Heaven. The unsearch'd mine

Hath not such gems. Earth's constellated thrones
Have not such pomp of purple and of gold.
It hath no features. In its face is set
A mirror, and the gazer sees his own.
It looks a god, but it is like *himself* !
It hath a mien of empery, and smiles
Majestically sweet—but how like *him* !
It follows not with Fortune. It is seen
Rarely or never in the rich man's hall.
It seeks the chamber of the gifted boy,
And lifts his humble window, and comes in.
The narrow walls expand, and spread away
Into a kingly palace, and the roof
Lifts to the sky, and unseen fingers work
The ceilings with rich blazonry, and write
His name in burning letters over all.
And ever, as he shuts his wildered eyes,
The phantom comes and lays upon his lids
A spell that murders sleep, and in his ear
Whispers a deathless word, and on his brain
Breathes a fierce thirst no water will allay.
He is its slave henceforth ! His days are spent
In chaining down his heart, and watching where
To rise by human weaknesses. His nights
Bring him no rest in all their blessed hours.
His kindred are forgotten or estranged.

Unhealthful fires burn constant in his eye.
 His lip grows restless, and its smile is curl'd
 Half into scorn—till the bright, fiery boy,
 That was a daily blessing but to see,
 His spirit was so bird-like and so pure,
 Is frozen, in the very flush of youth,
 Into a cold, care-fretted, heartless *man* !

And what is its reward ? At best, a name !
 Praise—when the ear has grown too dull to hear ;
 Gold—when the senses it should please are dead ;
 Wreaths—when the hair they cover has grown gray ;
 Fame—when the heart it should have thrill'd is numb ;
 All things but *love*—when love is all we want,
 And close behind comes Death, and ere we know
 That even these unavailing gifts are ours,
 He sends us, stripp'd and naked, to the grave !

Is it *its own* reward ? Reply to it
 Every aspiring heart within these walls !
 Summon the shadows of those bitter hours
 Wasted in brooding on neglect ! Recall
 The burning tears wrung from a throbbing brain
 By a proud effort foil'd ; and after all
 These agonies are number'd, rack your heart
 Back to its own self-nurtur'd wretchedness,

And when the pangs are crowded into one
Of all life's scorpion-stings, and Death itself
Is sent or stayed, as it would bless or curse,
Tell me if *self-misgiving* torture not
Unutterably more!

Yet this is all!

The world has no such glorious phantom else.
The spirit that could slave itself to *Gold*
Hath never drunk of knowledge at the well.
And *Pleasure*, if the senses would expand
And multiply with using, might delude
The flesh-imprisoned fancy—but not long.
And earthly *Love*—if measured, is too tame—
And if it drink, as in proud hearts it will,
At the deep springs of life, is but a cloud
Brooding with nameless sorrow on the soul—
A sadness—a sick-heartedness—a tear!

And these are the high idols of this world!
Retreating shadows caught but at the grave—
Mocking delusions, changing at the touch—
Of one false spirit the false children all.
And yet, what godlike gifts neglected lie
Wasting and marr'd in the forgotten soul!
The finest workmanship of God is there.
'Tis fleetier than the wings of light and wind;

'Tis subtler than the rarest shape of air ;
 Fire and wind and water do its will ;
 Earth has no secret from its delicate eye ;
 The air no alchymy it solveth not ;
 The star-writ Heavens are read and understood,
 And every sparry mineral hath a name,
 And truth is recogniz'd, and beauty felt,
 And God's own image stamp'd upon its brow.

How is it so forgotten ? *Will* it live
 When the great firmament is rolled away ?
Hath it a voice forever audible,
 " I AM ETERNAL ! " *Can* it overcome
 This mocking passion-fiend, and even here
 Live like a seraph upon truth and light ?

How can we ever be the slaves we are,
 With a sweet angel sitting in our breasts !
 How can we creep so lowly, when our wings
 Tremble and plead for freedom ! Look at him
 Who reads aright the image on his soul,
 And gives it nurture like a child of light.
 His life is calm and blessed, for his peace,
 Like a rich pearl beyond the diver's ken,
 Lies deep in his own bosom. He is pure,
 For the soul's errands are not done with men.

His senses are subdued and serve the soul.
He feels no void, for every faculty
Is used, and the fine balance of desire
Is perfect, and strains evenly, and on.
Content dwells with him, for his mind is fed,
And Temperance has driven out unrest.
He heaps no gold. It cannot buy him more
Of any thing he needs. ' The air of Heaven
Visits no freshlier the rich man's brow ;
He has his portion of each silver star
Sent to his eye as freely, and the light
Of the blest sun pours on his book as clear
As on the golden missal of a king.
The spicy flowers are free to him ; the sward,
And tender moss, and matted forest leaves
Are as elastic to his weary feet ;
The pictures in the fountains, and beneath
The spreading trees, fine pencilings of light,
Stay while he gazes on them ; the bright birds
Know not that he is poor ; and as he comes
From his low roof at morn, up goes the lark
Mounting and singing to the gate of Heaven,
And merrily away the little brook
Trips with its feet of silver, and a voice
Almost articulate, of perfect joy.
Air to his forehead, water to his lips,

Heat to his blood, come just as faithfully,
And his own faculties as freely play.
Love fills his voice with music, and the tear
Springs at as light a bidding to his eye;
And his free limbs obey him, and his sight
Flies on its wondrous errands every where.

What does he need? Next to the works of God
His friends are the rapt sages of old time;
And they impart their wisdom to his soul
In lavish fulness, when and where he will.
He sits in his mean dwelling and communes
With Socrates and Plato, and the shades
Of all great men and holy, and the words
Written in fire by Milton, and the King
Of Israel, and the troop of glorious bards,
Ravish and steal his soul up to the sky—
And what is it to him, if these come in
And visit him, that at his humble door
There are no pillars with rich capitals
And walls of curious workmanship within?

I stand not here in Wisdom's sacred stole.
My lips have not been touch'd with holy fire.
An humbler office than a counsellor
Of human duties, and an humbler place

Would better grace my knowledge and my years.
I would not seem presuming. Yet have I
Mingled a little in this earnest world,
And staked upon its chances, and have learned
Truths that I never gather'd from my books.
And though the lessons they have taught me seem
Things of the wayside to the practised *man*,
It is a wisdom by much wandering learned;
And if but one young spirit bend its wing
More in the eye of Heaven because it knew
The erring courses that bewildered mine,
I have not suffered, nor shall teach in vain.

It is a lesson oftener learned than loved—
All knowledge is not nourishment. The mind
May pine upon its food. In reckless thirst
The scholar sometimes kneels beside the stream
Polluted by the lepers of the mind.
The sceptic, with his doubts of all things good
And faith in all things evil, has been there;
And, as the stream was mingled, he has strown
The shore with all bright flowers to tempt the eye,
And sloped the banks down gently for the feet;
And Genius, like a fallen child of light,
Has filled the place with magic, and compell'd
Most beautiful creations into forms

And images of license, and they come
And tempt you with bewildering grace to kneel
And drink of the wild waters; and behind
Stand the strong Passions, pleading to go in;
And the approving world looks silent on;
Till the pleased mind conspires against itself,
And finds a subtle reason why 'tis good.
We are deceived, though, even as we drink,
We taste the evil. In his sweetest tone
The lying Tempter whispers in our ear,
"Tho' it may *stain*, 'twill *strengthen* your proud wings;"
And in the wild ambition of the soul
We drink anew, and dream like Lucifer
To mount upon our daring draught to Heaven.

I need not follow the similitude.
Health is *vitality*, and if the mind
Is fed on poison, it *must* lose its power.
The vision that forever strains to err
Soon finds its task a habit; and the taste
That will own nothing true or beautiful
Soon finds the world distorted as itself;
And the loose mind, that feeds an appetite
For the enticements of licentious thought,
Contracts a leprosy that oversteals
Its senses, like a palsy, chill, and fast.

The soul must be in health to keep its powers.
It must lie open to the influences
Of all things pure and simple. Like a flower
Within a stifled chamber, it will droop
If hidden from the pleasant sun and air;
And every delicate fibre must have room
To quicken and extend, and more than all,
The stream that gives it moisture *must* be pure.

Another lesson with my manhood came.
I have unlearned contempt. It is the sin
That is engender'd earliest in the soul,
And doth beset it like a poison-worm,
Feeding on all its beauty. As it steals
Into the bosom you may see the light
Of the clear, heavenly eye grow cold and dim,
And the fine, upright glory of the brow
Cloud with mistrust, and the unfetter'd lip,
That was as free and changeful as the wind,
Even in sadness redolent of love,
Curl'd with the iciness of a constant scorn.
It eats into the mind till it pollutes
All its pure fountains. Feeling, reason, taste
Breathe of its chill corruption. Every sense
That could convey a pleasure is benumb'd,
And the bright human being, that was made

Full of all warm affections, and with power
To look through all things lovely up to God,
Is changed into a cold and doubting fiend,
With but one use for reason—to *despise*!

Oh if there is one law above the rest
Written in wisdom—if there is a word
That I would trace as with a pen of fire
Upon the unsunn'd temper of a child—
If there is any thing that keeps the mind
Open to angel visits, and repels
The ministry of ill—*'tis human love!*
God has made nothing worthy of contempt.
The smallest pebble in the well of truth
Has its peculiar meaning, and will stand
When man's best monuments have passed away.
The law of Heaven is *love* and though its name;
Has been usurp'd by passion, and profaned
To its unholy uses through all time,
Still, the eternal principle is pure;
And in these deep affections that we feel
Omnipotent within us, we but see
The lavish measure in which love is given,
And in the yearning tenderness of a child
For every bird that sings above his head,
And every creature feeding on the hills,

And every tree, and flower, and running brook,
We see how every thing was *made to love*,
And how they err, who, in a world like this,
Find any thing to hate but human pride!

Oh, if we are not bitterly deceived—
If this familiar spirit that communes
With yours this hour—that has the power to search
All things but its own compass—is a spark
Struck from the burning essence of its God—
If, as we dream, in every radiant star
We see a shining gate through which the soul,
In its degrees of being, will ascend—
If, when these weary organs drop away,
We shall forget their uses, and commune
With angels and each other, as the stars
Mingle their light, in silence and in love—
What is this fleshly fetter of a day
That we should bind it with immortal flowers!
How do we ever gaze upon the sky,
And watch the lark soar up till he is lost,
And turn to our poor perishing dreams away,
Without one tear for our imprisoned wings!

THE DYING ALCHYMIST.

THE night-wind with a desolate moan swept by,
And the old shutters of the turret swung
Screaming upon their hinges, and the moon,
As the torn edges of the clouds flew past,
Struggled aslant the stained and broken panes
So dimly, that the watchful eye of death
Scarcely was conscious when it went and came.

* * * * *

The fire beneath his crucible was low;
Yet still it burned, and ever as his thoughts
Grew insupportable, he raised himself
Upon his wasted arm, and stirred the coals
With difficult energy, and when the rod
Fell from his nerveless fingers, and his eye
Felt faint within its socket, he shrunk back
Upon his pallet, and with unclosed lips

Muttered a curse on death! The silent room
From its dim corners mockingly gave back
His rattling breath; the humming in the fire
Had the distinctness of a knell, and when
Duly the antique horologe beat one,
He drew a phial from beneath his head,
And drank. And instantly his lips compressed,
And with a shudder in his skeleton frame,
He rose with supernatural strength, and sat
Upright, and communed with himself:—

I did not think to die
Till I had finished what I had to do;
I thought to pierce th' eternal secret through
With this my mortal eye;
I felt—Oh God! it seemeth even now
This cannot be the death-dew on my brow.

And yet it is—I feel
Of this dull sickness at my heart afraid;
And in my eyes the death-sparks flash and fade;
And something seems to steal
Over my bosom like a frozen hand,
Binding its pulses with an icy band.

And this is death! But why
Feel I this wild recoil? It cannot be
Th' immortal spirit shuddereth to be free!
Would it not leap to fly,
Like a chained eaglet at its parent's call?
I fear—I fear that this poor life is all!

Yet thus to pass away!—
To live but for a hope that mocks at last—
To agonize, to strive, to watch, to fast,
To waste the light of day,
Night's better beauty, feeling, fancy, thought,
All that we have and are—for this—for nought!

Grant me another year,
God of my spirit!—but a day—to win
Something to satisfy this thirst within!
I would *know* something here!
Break for me but one seal that is unbroken!
Speak for me but one word that is unspoken!

Vain—vain!—my brain is turning
With a swift dizziness, and my heart grows sick,
And these hot temple-throbs come fast and thick,

And I am freezing—burning—
 Dying! Oh God! if I might only live!—
 My phial—Ha! it thrills me—I revive.

* * * * *

Ay—were not man to die
 He were too glorious for this narrow sphere.
 Had he but time to brood on knowledge here—
 Could he but train his eye—
 Might he but wait the mystic word and hour—
 Only his Maker would transcend his power!

Earth has no mineral strange—
 Th' illimitable air no hidden wings—
 Water no quality in its covert springs,
 And fire no power to change—
 Seasons no mystery, and stars no spell,
 Which the unwasting soul might not compel.

Oh, but for time to track
 The upper stars into the pathless sky—
 To see th' invisible spirits, eye to eye—
 To hurl the lightning back—
 To tread unhurt the sea's dim-lighted halls—
 To chase Day's chariot to the horizon walls—

And more, much more—for now
The life-sealed fountains of my nature move—
To nurse and purify this human love—
To clear the god-like brow
Of weakness and mistrust, and bow it down,
Worthy and beautiful, to the much-loved one—

This were indeed to feel
The soul-thirst slaken at the living stream—
To live—Oh God! that life is but a dream!
And death——Aha! I reel—
Dim—dim—I faint—darkness comes o'er my eye—
Cover me! save me!——God of Heaven! I die!

'Twas morning, and the old man lay alone—
No friend had closed his eyelids, and his lips,
Open and ashy pale, th' expression wore
Of his death-struggle. His long silvery hair
Lay on his hollow temples thin and wild.
His frame was wasted, and his features wan
And haggard as with want, and in his palm
His nails were driven deep, as if the throe
Of the last agony had wrung him sore.

The storm was raging still. The shutters swung
Screaming as harshly in the fitful wind,

And all without went on—as aye it will
Sunshine or tempest, reckless that a heart
Is breaking, or has broken in its change.

The fire beneath the crucible was out ;
The vessels of his mystic art lay round,
Useless and cold as the ambitious hand
That fashioned them, and the small silver rod,
Familiar to his touch for threescore years,
Lay on th' alembic's rim, as if it still
Might vex the elements at its master's will.

And thus had passed from its unequal frame
A soul of fire—a sun-bent eagle stricken
From his high soaring down—an instrument
Broken with its own compass. He was born
Taller than he might walk beneath the stars,
And with a spirit tempered like a god's,
He was sent blindfold on a path of light,
And turn'd aside and perished ! Oh how poor
Seems the rich gift of genius, when it lies,
Like the adventurous bird that hath out-flown
His strength upon the sea, ambition-wrecked—
A thing the thrush might pity, as she sits
Brooding in quiet on her lowly nest.

THE LEPER.

"Room for the leper! Room!" And as he came
The cry passed on—"Room for the leper! Room!"
Sunrise was slanting on the city gates
Rosy and beautiful, and from the hills
The early risen poor were coming in
Duly and cheerfully to their toil, and up
Rose the sharp hammer's clink, and the far hum
Of moving wheels and multitudes astir,
And all that in a city murmur swells,
Unheard but by the watcher's weary ear,
Aching with night's dull silence, or the sick
Hailing the welcome light, and sounds that chase
The death-like images of the dark away.

"Room for the leper!" And aside they stood
Matron, and child, and pitiless manhood—all

Who met him on his way—and let him pass.
And onward through the open gate he came,
A leper with the ashes on his brow,
Sackcloth about his loins, and on his lip
A covering, stepping painfully and slow,
And with a difficult utterance, like one
Whose heart is with an iron nerve put down,
Crying “Unclean!—Unclean!”

’Twas now the depth

Of the Judean summer, and the leaves
Whose shadows lay so still upon his path,
Had budded on the clear and flashing eye
Of Judah’s loftiest noble. He was young,
And eminently beautiful, and life
Mantled in eloquent fulness on his lip,
And sparkled in his glance, and in his mien
There was a gracious pride that every eye
Followed with benisons— and this was he!
With the soft airs of Summer there had come
A torpor on his frame, which not the speed
Of his best barb, nor music, nor the blast
Of the bold huntsman’s horn, nor aught that stirs
The spirit to its bent, might drive away.
The blood beat not as wont within his veins;
Dimness crept o’er his eye; a drowsy sloth

Fettered his limbs like palsy, and his port,
With all its loftiness, seemed struck with eld.
Even his voice was changed—a languid moan
Taking the place of the clear, silver key;
And brain and sense grew faint, as if the light,
And very air, were steeped in sluggishness.
He strove with it awhile, as manhood will,
Ever too proud for weakness, till the rein
Slackened within his grasp, and in its poise
The arrowy jereed like an aspen shook.
Day after day he lay as if in sleep.
His skin grew dry and bloodless, and white scales
Circled with livid purple, covered him.
And then his nails grew black, and fell away
From the dull flesh about them, and the hues
Deepened beneath the hard unmoistened scales,
And from their edges grew the rank white hair,
—And Helon was a leper!

Day was breaking

When at the altar of the temple stood
The holy priest of God. The incense lamp
Burned with a struggling light, and a low chant
Swelled through the hollow arches of the roof
Like an articulate wail, and there, alone,
Wasted to ghastly thinness, Helon knelt.

The echoes of the melancholy strain
Died in the distant aisles, and he rose up,
Struggling with weakness, and bowed down his head
Unto the sprinkled ashes, and put off
His costly raiment for the leper's garb,
And with the sackcloth round him, and his lip
Hid in a loathsome covering, stood still
Waiting to hear his doom:—

Depart! depart, O child
Of Israel, from the temple of thy God,
For He has smote thee with his chastening rod,
And to the desert wild
From all thou lov'st away thy feet must flee,
That from thy plague His people may be free.

Depart! and come not near
The busy mart, the crowded city, more;
Nor set thy foot a human threshold o'er:
And stay thou not to hear
Voices that call thee in the way; and fly
From all who in the wilderness pass by.

Wet not thy burning lip
In streams that to a human dwelling glide;
Nor rest thee where the covert fountains hide,

Nor kneel thee down to dip
'The water where the pilgrim bends to drink,
By desert well, or river's grassy brink.

And pass thou not between
The weary traveller and the cooling breeze,
And lie not down to sleep beneath the trees
Where human tracks are seen;
Nor milk the goat that browseth on the plain,
Nor pluck the standing corn, or yellow grain.

And now depart! and when
Thy heart is heavy, and thine eyes are dim,
Lift up thy prayer beseechingly to Him
Who, from the tribes of men,
Selected thee to feel his chastening rod—
Depart! O leper! and forget not God!

And he went forth—alone! not one of all
The many whom he loved, nor she whose name
Was woven in the fibres of the heart
Breaking within him now, to come and speak
Comfort unto him. Yea—he went his way,
Sick and heart-broken, and alone—to die!—
For God had cursed the leper!

It was noon,
And Helon knelt beside a stagnant pool
In the lone wilderness, and bathed his brow,
Hot with the burning leprosy, and touched
The loathsome water to his fevered lips,
Praying that he might be so blest—to die!
Footsteps approached, and with no strength to flee,
He drew the covering closer on his lip,
Crying "Unclean! Unclean!" and in the folds
Of the coarse sackcloth shrouding up his face,
He fell upon the earth till they should pass.
Nearer the stranger came, and bending o'er
The leper's prostrate form, pronounced his name.

"Helon!"—the voice was like the master-tone
Of a rich instrument—most strangely sweet;
And the dull pulses of disease awoke,
And for a moment beat beneath the hot
And leprous scales with a restoring thrill.
"Helon! arise!" and he forgot his curse,
And rose and stood before him.

Love and awe
Mingled in the regard of Helon's eye
As he beheld the stranger. He was not
In costly raiment clad, nor on his brow
The symbol of a princely lineage wore;

No followers at his back, nor in his hand
Buckler, or sword, or spear—yet in his mien
Command sat throned serene, and if he smiled,
A kingly condescension graced his lips,
The lion would have crouched to in his lair.
His garb was simple, and his sandals worn;
His stature modelled with a perfect grace;
His countenance, the impress of a God,
Touched with the open innocence of a child;
His eye was blue and calm, as is the sky
In the serenest noon; his hair unshorn
Fell to his shoulders; and his curling beard
The fulness of perfected manhood bore.
He looked on Helon earnestly awhile,
As if his heart was moved, and stooping down
He took a little water in his hand
And laid it on his brow, and said, "Be clean!"
And lo! the scales fell from him, and his blood
Coursed with delicious coolness through his veins,
And his dry palms grew moist, and on his brow
The dewy softness of an infant's stole.
His leprosy was cleansed, and he fell down
Prostrate at Jesus' feet, and worshipped him.

PARRHASIUS.

"Parrhasius, a painter of Athens, amongst those Olynthian captives Philip of Macedon brought home to sell, bought one very old man; and when he had him at his house, put him to death with extreme torture and torment, the better, by his example, to express the pains and passions of his Prometheus, whom he was then about to paint."—*Burton's Anat. of Mel.*

THERE stood an unsold captive in the mart,
A gray-haired and majestic old man,
Chained to a pillar. It was almost night,
And the last seller from his place had gone,
And not a sound was heard but of a dog
Crunching beneath the stall a refuse bone,
Or the dull echo from the pavement rung
As the faint captive changed his weary feet.
He had stood there since morning, and had borne
From every eye in Athens the cold gaze
Of curious scorn. The Jew had taunted him
For an Olynthian slave. The buyer came
And roughly struck his palm upon his breast,

And touched his unhealed wounds, and with a sneer
Passed on, and when, with weariness o'erspent,
He bowed his head in a forgetful sleep,
Th' inhuman soldier smote him, and with threats
Of torture to his children summoned back
The ebbing blood into his pallid face.

'Twas evening, and the half descended sun
Tipped with a golden fire the many domes
Of Athens, and a yellow atmosphere
Lay rich and dusky in the shaded street
Through which the captive gazed. He had borne up
With a stout heart that long and weary day,
Haughtily patient of his many wrongs,
But now he was alone, and from his nerves
The needless strength departed, and he leaned
Prone on his massy chain, and let his thoughts
Throng on him as they would. Unmarked of him,
Parrhasius at the nearest pillar stood,
Gazing upon his grief. Th' Athenian's cheek
Flushed as he measured with a painter's eye
The moving picture. The abandon'd limbs,
Stained with the oozing blood, were laced with veins
Swollen to purple fulness; the gray hair,
'Thin and disordered, hung about his eyes,
And as a thought of wilder bitterness

Rose in his memory, his lips grew white,
And the fast workings of his bloodless face
Told what a tooth of fire was at his heart.
* * * *

The golden light into the painter's room
Streamed richly, and the hidden colors stole
From the dark pictures radiantly forth,
And in the soft and dewy atmosphere
Like forms and landscapes magical they lay.
The walls were hung with armor, and about
In the dim corners stood the sculptured forms
Of Cytheris, and Dian, and stern Jove,
And from the casement soberly away
Fell the grotesque long shadows, full and true,
And, like a veil of filmy mellowness,
The lint-specks floated in the twilight air.

Parrhasius stood, gazing forgetfully
Upon his canvass. There Prometheus lay,
Chained to the cold rocks of Mount Caucasus,
The vulture at his vitals, and the links
Of the lame Lemnian festering in his flesh,
And as the painter's mind felt through the dim,
Rapt mystery, and plucked the shadows wild
Forth with its reaching fancy, and with form
And color clad them, his fine, earnest eye,

Flashed with a passionate fire, and the quick curl
Of his thin nostril, and his quivering lip
Were like the winged God's, breathing from his flight.

“Bring me the captive now!
My hand feels skilful, and the shadows lift
From my waked spirit airily and swift,
And I could paint the bow
Upon the bended heavens—around me play
Colors of such divinity to-day.

Ha! bind him on his back!
Look! as Prometheus in my picture here—
Quick—or he faints!—stand with the cordial near!
Now—bend him to the rack!
Press down the poison'd links into his flesh!
And tear agape that healing wound afresh!

So—let him writhe! How long
Will he live thus? Quick, my good pencil, now!
What a fine agony works upon his brow!
Ha! gray-haired, and so strong!
How fearfully he stifles that short moan!
Gods! if I could but paint a dying groan!

"Pity" thee! So I do!

I pity the dumb victim at the altar—
But does the robed priest for his *pity* falter?

I'd rack thee though I knew
A thousand lives were perishing in thine—
What were ten thousand to a fame like mine?

"Hereafter!" Ay—*hereafter!*

A whip to keep a coward to his track!
What gave Death ever from his kingdom back
To check the sceptic's laughter?
Come from the grave to-morrow with that story,
And I may take some softer path to glory.

No, no, old man! we die
Ev'n as the flowers, and we shall breathe away
Our life upon the chance wind, ev'n as they—
Strain well thy fainting eye—
For when that bloodshot quivering is o'er,
The light of heaven will never reach thee more.

Yet there's a deathless *name!*

A spirit that the smothering vault shall spurn,
And like a steadfast planet mount and burn—

And though its crown of flame
Consumed my brain to ashes as it won me—
By all the fiery stars! I'd pluck it on me!

Ay—though it bid me rifle
My heart's last fount for its insatiate thirst—
Though every life-strung nerve be maddened first—
Though it should bid me stifle
The yearning in my throat for my sweet child,
And taunt its mother till my brain went wild—

All—I would do it all—
Sooner than die, like a dull worm, to rot—
Thrust foully into the earth to be forgot—
Oh Heavens—but I appal
Your heart, old man! forgive——ha! on your lives
Let him not faint!—rack him till he revives!

Vain—vain—give o'er. His eye
Glazes apace. He does not feel you now—
Stand back! I'll paint the death-dew on his brow!
Gods! if he do not die
But for *one* moment—one—till I eclipse
Conception with the scorn of those calm lips!

Shivering! Hark! he mutters
 Brokenly now—that was a difficult breath—
 Another? Wilt thou never come, oh, Death!

Look! how his temple flutters!
 Is his heart still? Aha! lift up his head!
 He shudders—gasps—Jove help him—so—he's dead."

* * * * *

How like a mountain devil in the heart
 Rules the unreined ambition! Let it once
 But play the monarch, and its haughty brow
 Glows with a beauty that bewilders thought
 And unthrones peace forever. Putting on
 The very pomp of Lucifer, it turns
 The heart to ashes, and with not a spring
 Left in the desert for the spirit's lip,
 We look upon our splendor and forget
 The thirst of which we perish! Yet hath life
 Many a falser idol. There are hopes
 Promising well, and love-touch'd dreams for some,
 And passions, many a wild one, and fair schemes
 For gold and pleasure—yet will only this
 Balk not the soul—Ambition only gives
 Even of bitterness a beaker *full*!
 Friendship is but a slow-awaking dream,
 Broken at best—Love is a lamp unseen
 Burning to waste, or if its light is found,

Nursed for an idle hour, then idly broken—
Gain is a grovelling care, and Folly tires,
And Quiet is a hunger never fed—
And from Love's very bosom, and from Gain
Or Folly, or a Friend, or from Repose—
From all but keen Ambition, will the soul
Snatch the first moment of forgetfulness
To wander like a restless child away.
Oh, if there were not better hopes than these—
Were there no palm beyond a feverish fame—
If the proud wealth flung back upon the heart
Must canker in its coffers—if the links
Treachery-broken, will unite no more—
If the deep-yearning love that hath not found
Its like in the cold world must waste in tears—
If truth and fervor and devotedness
Finding no worthy altar, must return
And die with their own fulness—if beyond
The grave there is no Heaven in whose wide air
The spirit may find room, and in the love
Of whose bright habitants the lavish heart
May spend itself—*what thrice-mocked fools are we!*

THE WIFE'S APPEAL.

HE sat and read. A book with golden clasps,
Printed in Florence, lettered as with jet
Set upon pearl, lay raised upon a frame
Before him. 'Twas a volume of old time;
And in it were fine mysteries of the stars
Solved with a cunning wisdom, and strange thoughts,
Half prophecy, half poetry, and dreams
Clearer than truth and speculations wild
That touched the secrets of your very soul,
They were so based on Nature. With a face
Glowing with thought, he pored upon the book.
The cushions of an Indian loom lay soft
Beneath his limbs, and, as he turned the page,
The sunlight, streaming through the curtain's fold,
Fell on his jewelled fingers tinct with rose,
And the rich woods of the quaint furniture

Lay deepening their veined colors in the sun,
And the stained marbles on their pedestals
Stood like a silent company—Voltaire,
With an infernal sneer upon his lips,
And Socrates, with godlike human love
Stamped on his countenance, and orators
Of times gone by that made them, and old bards,
And Medicean Venus, half divine.
Around the room were shelves of dainty lore,
And rich old pictures hung upon the walls
Where the slant light fell on them, and cased gems,
Medallions, rare mosaics, and antiques
From Herculaneum the niches filled.
And on a table of enamel, wrought
With a lost art in Italy, there lay
Prints of fair women, and engravings queer,
And a new poem, and a costly toy,
And in their midst a massive lamp of bronze
Burning sweet spices constantly. Asleep
Upon the carpet couched a graceful hound
Of a rare breed, and as his master gave
A murmur of delight at some sweet line,
He raised his slender head, and kept his eye
Upon him till the pleasant smile had passed
From his mild lips, and then he slept again.

The light beyond the crimson folds grew dusk,
And the clear letters of the pleasant book
Mingled and blurred, and the lithe hound rose up,
And with his earnest eye upon the door,
Listened attentively. It came as wont—
The fall of a light foot upon the stair—
And the fond animal sprang out to meet
His mistress, and caress the ungloved hand
He seemed to know was beautiful. She stooped
Gracefully down and touched his silken ears
As she passed in—then, with a tenderness,
Half playful and half serious, she knelt
Upon the ottoman, and pressed her lips
Upon her husband's forehead.

* * * * *

She rose and put the curtain folds aside
From the high window, and looked out upon
The shining stars in silence. "Look they not
Like Paradises to thine eye," he said—
But as he spoke a tear fell through the light,
And starting from his seat he folded her
Close to his heart, and with unsteady voice
Asked if she was not happy. A faint smile
Broke through her tears; and pushing off the hair
From his fine forehead, she held back his head

With her white hand, and gazing on his face
Gave to her heart free utterance:—

Happy?—yes, dearest—blest
Beyond the limit of my wildest dream—
Too bright, indeed, my blessings ever seem;
There lives not in my breast
One of Hope's promises by Love unkept,
And yet—forgive me, Ernest—I have wept.

How shall I speak of sadness,
And seem not thankless to my God and thee?
How can the lightest wish but seem to be
The very whim of madness?
Yet, oh, there is a boon thy love beside—
And I will ask it of thee—in my pride!

List, while my boldness lingers!
If thou hadst won yon twinkling star to hear thee—
If thou couldst bid the rainbow's curve bend near thee—
If thou couldst charm thy fingers
To weave for thee the Sunset's tent of gold—
Wouldst in thine own heart treasure it untold?

If thou hadst Ariel's gift,
To course the veined metals of the earth—
If thou couldst wind a fountain to its birth—
If thou couldst know the drift
Of the lost cloud that sailed into the sky—
Wouldst keep it for thine own unanswered eye?

It is thy life and mine!—
Thou in thyself, and I in thee, misprison
Gifts like a circle of bright stars unrisen—
For thou, whose mind should shine
Eminent as a planet's light, art here—
Moved with the starting of a woman's tear!

I have told o'er thy powers
In secret, as a miser tells his gold.
I know thy spirit calm, and true, and bold—
I've watched thy lightest hours,
And seen thee, in the wildest flush of youth,
Touch'd with the instinct ravishment of truth.

Thou hast the secret strange
To read that hidden book, the human heart—
Thou hast the ready writer's practised art—

Thou hast the thought to range
The broadest circles Intellect hath ran—
And thou art God's best work—an honest man!

And yet—thou slumberest here
Like a caged bird that never knew its pinions,
And others track in glory the dominions
Where thou hast not thy peer—
Setting their weaker eyes unto the sun,
And plucking honor that thou shouldst have won.

Oh, if thou lov'dst me ever,
Ernest, my husband! If th' idolatry
That lets go heaven to fling its all on thee—
If to dismiss thee never
In dream or prayer, have given me aught to claim—
Heed me—oh, heed me! and awake to Fame!

Her lips
Closed with an earnest sweetness, and she sat
Gazing into his eyes as if her look
Searched their dark orbs for answer. The warm blood
Into his temples mounted, and across
His countenance the flush of passionate thoughts
Passed with irresolute quickness. He rose up
And paced the dim room rapidly awhile,

Calming his troubled mind, and then he came
And laid his hand upon her forehead white,
And in a voice of heavenly tenderness
Answered her :

Before I knew thee, Mary,
Ambition was my angel. I did hear
Forever its witch'd voices in mine ear—
My days were visionary,
My nights were like the slumbers of the mad,
And every dream swept o'er me glory-clad.

I read the burning letters
Of warlike pomp, on History's page, alone—
I counted nothing the struck widow's moan—
I heard no clank of fetters—
I only felt the trumpet's stirring blast,
And lean-eyed Famine stalked unchallenged past.

I heard, with veins of lightning,
The utterance of the Statesman's word of power—
Binding and loosing nations in an hour—
But while my eye was brightening,
A masked detraction breathed upon his fame,
And a cursed serpent slined his written name.

The Poet rapt mine ears
With the transporting music that he sung.
With fibres from his life his lyre he strung,
And bathed the world in tears—
And then he turned away to muse apart,
And Scorn stole after him and broke his heart!

Yet here and there I saw
One who did set the world at calm defiance,
And press right onward with a bold reliance;
And he did seem to awe
The very Shadows pressing on his breast,
And, with a strong heart, held himself at rest.

And then I looked again,
And he had shut the door upon the crowd,
And on his face he lay and groined aloud—
Wrestling with hidden pain;
And in her chamber sat his wife in tears,
And his sweet babes grew sad with whispered fears.

And so I turned sick-hearted
From the bright cup away, and in my sadness
Searched mine own bosom for some spring of gladness;
And lo! a fountain started

Whose waters ev'n in death flow calm and fast,
And my wild fever-thirst was slaked at last.

And then I met thee, Mary,
And felt how love may into fulness pour,
Like light into a fountain running o'er;
And I did hope to vary
My life but with surprises sweet as this—
A dream, but for thy waking, filled with bliss.

Yet now I feel my spirit
Bitterly stirred, and—nay, lift up thy brow!
It is thine own voice echoing to thee now,
And thou didst pray to hear it—
I must unto my work and my stern hours!
Take from my room thy harp, and books, and flowers!
* * * * *
* * * * * A year—

And in his room again he sat alone.
His frame had lost its fulness in that time;
His handsome features had grown sharp and thin,
And from his lips the constant smile had faded.
Wild fires had burned the languor from his eye:
The lids looked fevered, and the brows were bent
With an habitual frown. He was much changed.
His chin was resting on his clenched hand,

And with his foot he beat upon the floor
Unconsciously the time of a sad tune.
Thoughts of the past preyed on him bitterly.
He had won power and held it. He had walked
Steadily upward in the eye of Fame,
And kept his truth unsullied—but his home
Had been invaded by envenomed tongues;
His wife—his spotless wife—had been assailed
By slander, and his child had grown afraid
To come to him—his manners were so stern.
He could not speak beside his own hearth freely.
His friends were half estranged, and vulgar men
Presumed upon their services and grew
Familiar with him. He'd small time to sleep,
And none to pray; and, with his heart in fetters,
He bore deep insults silently, and bowed
Respectfully to men who knew he loathed them!
And when his heart was eloquent with truth,
And love of country and an honest zeal
Burned for expression, he could find no words
They would not misinterpret with their lies.
What were his many honors to him now?
The good half doubted, falsehood was so strong—
His home was hateful with its cautious fears—
His wife lay trembling on his very breast
Frighted with calumny!—And this is FAME.

THE SCHOLAR OF THEBET BEN CHORAT.*

'Influentia cœli morbum hunc movet, interdum omnibus aliis amotis.'

Melancthon de anima, cap. de humoribus

NIGHT in Arabia. An hour ago
Pale Dian had descended from the sky,
Flinging her cestus out upon the sea,
And at their watches now the solemn stars
Stood vigilant and lone, and, dead asleep,
With not a shadow moving on its breast,
The breathing Earth lay in its silver dew,
And, trembling on their myriad viewless wings,
Th' imprisoned odors left the flowers to dream
And stole away upon the yielding air.

*A famous Arabian astrologer, who is said to have spent forty years in discovering the motion of the eighth sphere. He had a scholar, a young Bedouin Arab, who, with a singular passion for knowledge, abandoned his wandering tribe, and, applying himself too closely to astrology, lost his reason, and died.

Ben Chorat's tower stands shadowy and tall
 In Mecca's loneliest street; and ever there,
 When night is at the deepest, burns his lamp
 As constant as the Cynosure, and forth
 From his looped window stretch the brazen tubes,
 Pointing forever at the central star
 Of that dim nebula just lifting now
 Over Mount Arafat. The sky to-night
 Is of a clearer blackness than is wont,
 And far within its depths the colored stars*
 Sparkle like gems—capricious Antares†
 Flushing and paling in the Southern arch,
 And azure Lyra, like a woman's eye,
 Burning with soft blue lustre, and away
 Over the desert the bright Polar-star,
 White as a flashing icicle, and here,

* Even to the naked eye, the stars appear of palpably different colors; but when viewed, with a prismatic glass, they may be very accurately classed into the red, the yellow, the brilliant white, the dull white, and the anomalous. This is true also of the planets, which shine by reflected light, and of course the difference of color must be supposed to arise from their different powers to absorb and reflect the rays of the sun. The original composition of the stars, and the different dispersive powers of their different atmospheres, may be supposed to account also for this phenomenon.

† This star exhibits a peculiar quality—a rapid and beautiful change in the color of its light; every alternate twinkling being of an intense reddish crimson color, and the answering one of a brilliant white.

Hung like a lamp above th' Arabian sea,
 Mars with his dusky glow, and, fairer yet,
 Mild Sirius* tinct with dewy violet,
 Set like a flower upon the breast of Eve;
 And in the zenith the sweet Pleiades,†
 (Alas! that even a star may pass from heaven
 And not be missed!) the linked Pleiades
 Undimmed are there, though from the sister band
 The fairest has gone down, and South away,
 Hirundo‡ with its little company,
 And white-browed Vesta, lamping on her path
 Lonely and planet-calm, and, all through heaven,
 Articulate almost, they troop to-night,
 Like unrobed angels in a prophet's trance.

Ben Chorat knelt before his telescope,||
 Gazing with earnest stillness on the stars.
 The gray hairs struggling from his turban folds,

* When seen with a prismatic glass, Sirius shows a large brush of exceedingly beautiful violet rays.

† The Pleiades are vertical in Arabia.

‡ An Arabic constellation placed instead of the *Piscis Australis*, because the swallow arrives in Arabia about the time of the heliacal rising of the Fishes.

|| An anachronism, the author is aware. The telescope was not invented for a century or two after the time of Ben Chorat.

Played with the entering wind upon his cheeks,
And on his breast his venerable beard
With supernatural whiteness loosely fell.
The black flesh swelled about his sandal thongs,
Tight with his painful posture, and his lean
And withered fingers to his knees were clenched,
And the thin lashes of his straining eye
Lay with unwinking closeness to the lens,
Stiffened with tense up-turning. Hour by hour,
Till the stars melted in the flush of morn,
The old astrologer knelt moveless there,
Ravished past pain with the bewildering spheres,
And, hour by hour, with the same patient thought,
Pored his pale scholar on the characters
Of Chaldee writ, as his gaze grew dim
With weariness, the dark-eyed Arab laid
His head upon the window and looked forth
Upon the heavens awhile, until the dews
And the soft beauty of the silent night
Cooled his flushed eyelids, and then patiently
He turned unto his constant task again.
The sparry glinting of the morning star
Shot through the leaves of a majestic palm
Fringing Mount Arafat, and, as it caught
The eye of the rapt scholar, he arose
And clasped the volume with an eager haste,

And as the glorious planet mounted on,
 Melting her way into the upper sky,
 He breathlessly gazed on her:—

‘ Star of the silver ray !
 Bright as a god, but punctual as a slave—
 What spirit the eternal canon gave
 That bends thee to thy way ?
 What is the soul that on thine arrowy light
 Is walking earth and heaven in pride to-night ?

We know when thou wilt soar
 Over the mount—thy change, and place, and time—
 ’Tis written in the Chaldee’s mystic rhyme
 As ’twere a priceless lore !
 I knew as much in my Bedouin garb—
 Coursing the desert on my flying barb ?

How oft amid the tents
 Upon Sahara’s sands I’ve walked alone,
 Waiting all night for thee, resplendent one !
 With what magnificence,
 In the last watches, to my thirsting eye,
 Thy passionate beauty flushed into the sky !

Oh, God! how flew my soul
 Out to thy glory—upward on thy ray—
 Panting as thou ascendest on thy way
 As if thine own control—
 This searchless spirit that I cannot find—
 Had set its radiant law upon my mind!

More than all stars in heaven
 I felt thee in my heart! my love became
 A frenzy, and consumed me with its flame.
 Ay—in the desert even—
 My dark eyed Abra coursing at my side,
 The star, not Abra, was my spirit's bride!

My Abra is no more!
 My 'desert-bird' is in a stranger's stall—
 My tribe, my tent—I sacrificed them all
 For this heart-wasting lore!—
 Yet than all these the thought is sweeter far—
Thou wert ascendant at my birth, bright star!

The Chaldee calls me *thine*—
 And in this breast, that I must rend to be
 A spirit upon wings of light like thee,

I feel that *thou art mine!*
 Oh, God! that these dull fetters would give way
 And let me forth to track thy silver ray!

* * * * * Ben Chorat rose
 And silently looked forth upon the East.
 The dawn was stealing up into the sky
 On its gray feet, the stars grew dim apace,
 And faded, till the Morning Star alone,
 Soft as a molten diamond's liquid fire,
 Burned in the heavens. The morn grew freshlier—
 The upper clouds were faintly touched with gold,
 The fan-palms rustled in the early air,
 Daylight spread cool and broadly to the hills,
 And still the star was visible, and still
 The young Bedouin with a straining eye
 Drank its departing light into his soul.
 It faded—melted—and the fiery rim
 Of the clear sun came up, and painfully
 The passionate scholar pressed upon his eyes
 His dusky fingers, and with limbs as weak
 As a sick child's, turned fainting to his couch,
 And slept. * * * * *

* * * It was the morning watch once more.
 The clouds were drifting rapidly above,

And dim and fast the glimmering stars flew through,
And as the fitful gust soughed mournfully,
The shutters shook, and on the sloping roof
Plashed heavily large, single drops of rain
And all was still again. Ben Chorat sat
By the dim lamp, and, while his scholar slept,
Pored on the Chaldee wisdom. At his feet,
Stretched on a pallet, lay the Arab boy
Muttering fast in his unquiet sleep,
And working his dark fingers in his palms
Convulsively. His sallow lips were pale,
And, as they moved, his teeth showed ghastly through,
White as a charnel bone, and, closely drawn
Upon his sunken eyes, as if to press
Some frightful image from the bloodshot balls,
His lids a moment quivered, and again
Relaxed, half open, in a calmer sleep.

Ben Chorat gazed upon the dropping sands
Of the departing hour. The last white grain
Fell through, and with the tremulous hand of age
The old astrologer reversed the glass,
And as the voiceless monitor went on,
Wasting and wasting with the precious hour,
He looked upon it with a moving lip,

And starting turned his gaze upon the heavens,
Cursing the clouds impatiently.

‘ ’Tis time!’

Muttered the dying scholar, and he dashed
The tangled hair from his black eyes away,
And, seizing on Ben Chorat’s mantle folds,
He struggled to his feet, and falling prone
Upon the window ledge, gazed stedfastly
Into the East:

‘ There is a cloud between—

She sits this instant on the mountain’s brow,
And that dusk veil hides all her glory now—

Yet floats she as serene

Into the heavens!—Oh, God! that even so
I could o’ermount my spirit-cloud, and go!

The cloud begins to drift!

Aha! Fling open! ’tis the star—the sky!
Touch me, immortal mother! and I fly!

Wider! thou cloudy rift!

Let through!—such glory should have radiant room!
Let through!—a star-child on its light goes home!

Speak to me, brethren bright!
 Ye who are floating in these living beams!
 Ye who have come to me in starry dreams!
 Ye who have winged the light
 Of our bright mother with its thoughts of flame—
 —(I *knew* it passed through spirits as it came)—

Tell me! what power have ye?
 What are the heights ye reach upon your wings?
 What know ye of the myriad wondrous things
 I perish but to see?
 Are ye thought-rapid?—Can ye fly as far—
 As instant as a thought, from star to star?

Where has the Pleiad gone?
 Where have all missing stars* found light and home?
 Who bids the Stella Mira† go and come?

* 'Missing stars' are often spoken of in the old books of astronomy. Hipparchus mentions one that appeared and vanished very suddenly; and in the beginning of the sixteenth century Kepler discovered a new star near the heel of the right foot of Serpentarius, 'so bright and sparkling that it exceeded anything he had ever seen before.' He 'took notice that it was every moment changing into some of the colors of the rainbow, except when it was near the horizon, when it was generally white.' It disappeared the following year, and has not been seen since.

† A wonderful star in the neck of the Whale, discovered by Fabricius in the fifteenth century. It appears and disappears seven times in six years, and continues in the greatest lustre for fifteen days together.

Why sits the Pole-star lone?
And why, like banded sisters, through the air
Go in bright troops the constellations fair?

Ben Chorat! dost thou mark?
The star! the star! By heavens, the cloud drifts o'er!
Gone—and I live! nay—will my heart beat more?
Look! master! 'tis all dark!
Not a clear speck in heaven!—my eye-balls smother!
Break through the clouds once more! oh, starry mother!

I will lie down! Yet stay!
The rain beats out the odor from the gums,
And strangely soft to-night the spice-wind comes!
I am a child alway
When it is on my forehead! Abra sweet!
Would I were in the desert at thy feet!

My barb! my glorious steed!
Methinks my soul would mount upon its track
More fleetly, could I die upon thy back!
How would thy thrilling speed
Quicken my pulse!—Oh, Allah! I get wild!
Would that I were once more a desert-child!

Nay—nay—I had forgot!
 My mother! my star-mother!—Ha! my breath
 Stifles!—more air!—Ben Chorat! this is—death!
 Touch me!—I feel you not!
 Dying!—Farewell! good master!—room! more room!
 Abra! I—loved thee; star—bright star! I—come!

How idly of the human heart we speak,
 Giving it gods of clay! How worse than vain
 Is the school homily, that Eden's fruit
 Cannot be plucked too freely from 'the tree
 Of good and evil' Wisdom sits alone,
 Topmost in heaven;—she is its light—its God!
 And in the heart of man she sits as high—
 Though grovelling eyes forget her oftentimes,
 Seeing but this world's idols. The pure mind
 Sees her forever; and in youth we come
 Filled with her sainted ravishment, and kneel,
 Worshipping God through her sweet altar-fires,
 And then is knowledge 'good.' We come too oft.
 The heart grows proud with fulness, and we soon
 Look with licentious freedom on the maid
 Throned in celestial beauty. There she sits,
 Robed in her soft and seraph loveliness,
 Instructing and forgiving, and we gaze
 Until desire grows wild, and, with our hands

Upon her very garments, are struck down,
Blasted with a consuming fire from heaven!
Yet, oh, how full of music from her lips
Breathe the calm tones of wisdom! Human praise
Is sweet, till envy mars it, and the touch
Of new-won gold stirs up the pulses well,
And woman's love, if in a beggar's lamp
'Twould burn, might light us cheerly through the world,
But Knowledge hath a far more wildering tongue,
And she will stoop and lead you to the stars,
And witch you with her mysteries, till gold
Is a forgotten dross, and power and fame
Toys of an hour, and woman's careless love
Light as the breath that breaks it. He who binds
His soul to knowledge steals the key of heaven—
But 'tis a bitter mockery that the fruit
May hang within his reach, and when, with thirst
Wrought to a maddening frenzy, he would taste—
It burns his lips to ashes!

THE HEALING OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

FRESHLY the cool breath of the coming eve
Stole through the lattice, and the dying girl
Felt it upon her forehead. She had lain
Since the hot noontide in a breathless trance,
Her thin pale fingers clasp'd within the hand
Of the heart-broken Ruler, and her breast,
Like the dead marble, white and motionless.
The shadow of a leaf lay on her lips,
And as it stirr'd with the awakening wind,
The dark lids lifted from her languid eyes,
And her slight fingers mov'd, and heavily
She turn'd upon her pillow. He was there—
The same lov'd, tireless watcher, and she look'd
Into his face until her sight grew dim
With the fast-filling tears, and, with a sigh
Of tremulous weakness murmuring his name,

She gently drew his hand upon her lips,
And kiss'd it as she wept. The old man sunk
Upon his knees, and in the drapery
Of the rich curtains buried up his face—
And when the twilight fell, the silken folds
Stirr'd with his prayer, but the slight hand he held
Had ceas'd its pressure, and he could not hear
In the dead, utter silence, that a breath
Came through her nostrils, and her temples gave
To his nice touch no pulse, and at her mouth
He held the lightest curl that on her neck
Lay with a mocking beauty, and his gaze
Ach'd with its deathly stillness. * * * *

* * * * * It was night—
And softly o'er the Sea of Gallilee
Danced the breeze-ridden ripples to the shore,
Tipp'd with the silver sparkles of the moon.
The breaking waves play'd low upon the beach
Their constant music, but the air beside
Was still as starlight, and the Saviour's voice,
In its rich cadences unearthly sweet,
Seem'd like some just born harmony in the air
Wak'd by the power of wisdom. On a rock,
With the broad moonlight falling on his brow,
He stood and taught the people. At his feet

Lay his small scrip, and pilgrim's scallop-shell,
And staff, for they had waited by the sea
Till he came o'er from Gadarene, and pray'd
For his wont teachings as he came to land.
His hair was parted meekly on his brow,
And the long curls from off his shoulders fell
As he leaned forward earnestly, and still
The same calm cadence, passionless and deep,
And in his looks the same mild majesty,
And in his mien the sadness mix'd with power,
Fill'd them with love and wonder. Suddenly,
As on his words entrancedly they hung,
The crowd divided, and among them stood
JAIRUS THE RULER. With his flowing robe
Gather'd in haste about his loins, he came,
And fix'd his eyes on Jesus. Closer drew
The twelve disciples to their master's side,
And silently the people shrunk away,
And left the haughty Ruler in the midst
Alone. A moment longer on the face
Of the meek Nazarine he kept his gaze,
And as the twelve look'd on him, by the light
Of the clear moon they saw a glistening tear
Steal to his silver beard, and drawing nigh
Unto the Saviour's feet, he took the hem
Of his coarse mantle, and with trembling hands

Press'd it upon his lips, and murmur'd low,

"*Master ! my daughter !*"— * * * * *

* * * * * The same silvery light
That shone upon the lone rock by the sea,
Slept on the Ruler's lofty capitals
As at the door he stood, and welcom'd in
Jesus and his disciples. All was still.
The echoing vestibule gave back the slide
Of their loose sandals, and the arrowy beam
Of moonlight slanting to the marble floor
Lay like a spell of silence in the rooms
As Jairus led them on. With hushing steps
He trod the winding stair, but ere he touch'd
The latchet, from within a whisper came,
"*Trouble the Master not—for she is dead !*"—
And his faint hand fell nerveless at his side
And his steps falter'd, and his broken voice
Chok'd in its utterance ;—But a gentle hand
Was laid upon his arm, and in his ear
The Saviour's voice sank thrillingly and low,
"*She is not dead—but sleepeth.*"

They pass'd in.

The spice-lamps in the alabaster urns
Burn'd dimly, and the white and fragrant smoke

Curl'd indolently on the chamber walls.
The silken curtain slumbered in their folds—
Not ev'n a tassel stirring in the air—
And as the Saviour stood beside the bed
And pray'd inaudibly, the Ruler heard
The quickening division of his breath
As he grew earnest inwardly. There came
A gradual brightness o'er his calm sad face,
And drawing nearer to the bed, he mov'd
The silken curtain silently apart
And look'd upon the maiden.

Like a form
Of matchless sculpture in her sleep she lay—
The linen vesture folded on her breast,
And over it her white transparent hands,
The blood still rosy in their tapering nails.
A line of pearl ran through her parted lips,
And in her nostrils, spiritually thin,
The breathing curve was mockingly like life,
And round beneath the faintly tinted skin
Ran the light branches of the azure veins—
And on her cheek the jet lash overlay
Matching the arches pencil'd on her brow.
Her hair had been unbound, and falling loose
Upon the pillow, hid her small round ears

In curls of glossy blackness, and about
Her polished neck, scarce touching it, they hung
Like airy shadows floating as they slept.
'Twas heavenly beautiful. The Saviour rais'd
Her hand from off her bosom, and spread out
The snowy fingers in his palm, and said
"*Maiden! Arise!*"—and suddenly a flush
Shot o'er her forehead, and along her lips
And through her cheek the rallied color ran,
And the still outline of her graceful form
Stirr'd in the linen vesture, and she clasp'd
The Saviour's hand, and fixing her dark eyes
Full on his beaming countenance—*AROSE!*

TO A CITY PIGEON.

Stoop to my window, thou beautiful dove!
Thy daily visits have touch'd my love.
I watch thy coming, and list the note
That stirs so low in thy mellow throat,
 And my joy is high
To catch the glance of thy gentle eye.

Why dost thou sit on the heated eaves,
And forsake the wood with its freshen'd leaves?
Why dost thou haunt the sultry street,
When the paths of the forest are cool and sweet?
 How canst thou bear
This noise of people—this sultry air?

Thou alone of the feather'd race
Dost look unscared on the human face;

Thou alone, with a wing to flee,
Dost love with man in his haunts to be ;
 And the "the gentle dove"
Has become a name for trust and love.

It is no light chance. Thou art kept apart,
Wisely by Him who has tam'd thy heart,
To stir the love for the bright and fair
That else were seal'd in the crowded air ;
 I sometimes dream
Angelic rays from thy pinions stream.

Come then, ever, when daylight leaves
The page I read, to my humble eaves,
And wash thy breast in the hollow spout,
And murmur thy low sweet music out,
 I hear and see
Lessons of Heaven, sweet bird, in thee !

ON A PICTURE OF A BEAUTIFUL BOY.

A BOY! yet in his eye you trace
The watchfulness of riper years,
And tales are in that serious face
Of feelings early steep'd in tears ;
And in that tranquil gaze
There lingers many a thought unsaid,
Shadows of other days,
Whose hours with shapes of beauty came and fled.

And sometimes it is even so!
The spirit ripens in the germ;
The new-seal'd fountains overflow,
The bright wings tremble in the worm.
The soul detects some passing token,
Some emblem, of a brighter world,
And, with its shell of clay unbroken,
Its shining pinions are unfurl'd,

And, like a blessed dream,
Phantoms, apparrell'd from the sky,
 Athwart its vision gleam,
As if the light of Heaven had touch'd its gifted eye.

'Tis strange how childhood's simple words
 Interpret Nature's mystic book—
How it will listen to the birds,
 Or ponder on the running brook,
 As if its spirit fed.
And strange that we remember not,
Who fill its eye, and weave its lot,
 How lightly it were led
Back to the home which it has scarce forgot.

ON THE PICTURE OF A "CHILD TIRED OF PLAY."

Tired of play! Tired of play!
What hast thou done this livelong day?
The birds are silent, and so is the bee;
The sun is creeping up steeple and tree;
The doves have flown to the sheltering eaves,
And the nests are dark with the drooping leaves,
Twilight gathers, and day is done—
How hast thou spent it, beautiful one!

Playing? But what hast thou done beside
To tell thy mother at even tide?
What promise of morn is left unbroken?
What kind word to thy playmate spoken?
Whom hast thou pitied, and whom forgiven?
How with thy faults has duty striven?
What hast thou learned by field and hill,

By greenwood path, and by singing rill?
There will come an eve to a longer day,
That will find thee tired—but not of play!
And thou wilt lean, as thou leanest now,
With drooping limbs and an aching brow,
And wish the shadows would faster creep,
And long to go to thy quiet sleep.

Well were it then if thine aching brow
Were as free from sin and shame as now!
Well for thee, if thy lip could tell
A tale like this, of a day spent well.
If thine open hand hath reliev'd distress—
If thy pity hath sprung to wretchedness—
If thou hast forgiven the sore offence,
And humbled thy heart with penitence—
If Nature's voices have spoken to thee
With their holy meanings eloquently—
If every creature hath won thy love,
From the creeping worm to the brooding dove.
If never a sad, low-spoken word
Hath plead with thy human heart unheard—
Then, when the night steals on as now,
It will bring relief to thine aching brow,
And, with joy and peace at the thought of rest,
Thou wilt sink to sleep on thy mother's breast.

